update

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UNDP assists largest civilian helicopter airlift in UN history for first national elections in Angola

To help ensure that Angola's first national elections were both free and fair, the United Nations undertook the most extensive civilian helicopter airlift of people in its history. UNDP provided the logistics and technical support and also raised donor contributions for this massive air operation.

Internationally recognized electoral procedures require that no group be excluded from any part of the voting process. All Angolans, therefore, even those in the most remote and inaccessible areas, had to be afforded the opportunity to participate in the elections, which took place 29-30 September. Ensuring that each of the country's 4.8 million registered voters had access to polling stations posed a monumental task in Angola, since transport is limited by a war torn and mine-ridden road and bridge network.

"This historic air operation, which cost about $10 million, was an essential element in the electoral process," says Miguel Da Graca, UNDP Resident Representative in Angola. "It was a daunting challenge, given the devastated condition of the country's infrastructure." Between 12,000 and 15,000 people in remote areas had to be airlifted to and from polling sites, of which more than 6,000 were established throughout the country.

The external assistance required for the entire electoral operation, including ground and air logistics, civic education material and training for registration and polling officers, amounted to approximately $22 million. In addition, the government agreed to provide aircraft fuel, and allocated more than $33 million for registration and electoral materials such as paper and ballot boxes.

To reach the one million Angolans living in areas inaccessible by road to voting stations, the UN deployed 40 MI-8 twenty-passenger helicopters and nine fixed-wing aircraft, averaging 13 seats. The monumental air operation required more than 4,000 hours of flight time to move electoral observers and personnel. It involved more than 300 pilots, mechanics, flight engineers, safety specialists, radio operators and air traffic controllers.

Angola's National Electoral Council, which is composed of all registered political parties, was responsible for organizing the elections, but asked the United Nations Angola Verification Mission to observe and verify the elections. The UN Department for Economic and Social Development worked with UNDP to arrange logistics for the ground activities. UNDP provided election coordinators, and experts in electoral registration, community education, communications and logistics.

Several countries contributed to the electoral process in Angola through a cost-sharing arrangement with UNDP. To date, these included: Sweden ($2.8 million); France ($1 million); Denmark ($500,000); Canada ($400,000); Norway ($400,000); Germany ($400,000); and Netherlands ($250,000). Other contributions for Angola's elections included $6.5 million from the European Community, $7.3 million from the United States, $2.1 million from Italy, $400,000 from Canada, and $140,000 from Egypt. Portugal and the United Kingdom provided ground transport equipment and vehicles. South Africa supplied four helicopters and two planes. Chevron provided two aircrafts and four technicians.

Accelerated humanitarian action for Somalia

United Nations agencies have initiated an accelerated emergency programme in Somalia to pave the way for eventual reconstruction of the country. The participating UN agencies will undertake a wide range of emergency operations within the next 100 days.

Relief and recovery activities must run in tandem. UNDP, together with other UN agencies, will take immediate steps to restore essential basic services. UNDP has already begun to re-establish water supply in Mogadishu. It will also implement

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large-scale waste disposal programmes and assist other agencies in providing resources for rural water supplies in 23 locations throughout Somalia.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is ready to deliver an estimated 100,000 megatonnes of food for general distribution in south and central Somalia. UNICEF will provide support to supplementary and intensive feeding of severely malnourished children. It will also conduct a massive measles vaccination programme, targeting 1.2 million children throughout the country. In addition, emphasis will be placed on ensuring availability and access to essential drugs.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will establish a full-time presence in Hargeisa where it will continue to support de-mining activities and food programmes for refugees returning from Ethiopia. To strengthen medical facilities, the World Food Programme will field public health coordinators.

UNICEF will also provide assistance for displaced families and support efforts to resettle these families through the delivery of seeds, tools, livestock and health programmes. These efforts will be closely coordinated with the provision of seeds, tools and livestock by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and food distribution programmes of the World Food Programme and other agencies.

Nepal moves toward privatization of three public enterprises

Three public companies in Nepal are well on their way to privatization. After an extensive period of technical preparations by a UNDP-supported international team of experts, negotiations are nearing completion between the Government of Nepal and prospective buyers of the public enterprises: Bhrikuti Paper Mills, Bansbari Leather and Shoe Factory, and Harisiddhi Brick and Tile Company. If final approval is granted, the sales will be the country's first sale of public enterprise.

UNDP, the International Labour Organisation and the World Bank collaborated on this pilot effort, which could serve as a model for future privatization exercises as the government continues to streamline its public sector. Nearly 60 public enterprises remain to be either privatized, or strengthened as public institutions.

UNDP played a key role in helping to manage the pilot privatization negotiations. During the process, the ILO made many recommendations that could be adopted into Nepal's labour law. The World Bank selected a leading financial management firm which ensured that the privatization preparations were speedy. The high quality of the appraisal and valuation of the three companies attracted strong bids from the prospective buyers.

Fine-tuning plans for computerized environmental network

UNDP recently convened a workshop in New York to better understand the environmental information needs of developing countries and how these needs can be served through a Sustainable Development Network (SDN). UNDP is laying the groundwork for the SDN, which is a "network of national networks" for sharing information for and about sustainable development.

The SDN will link sources and users of information on sustainable development in government, research, non-governmental, grassroots and entrepreneurial organizations on a global scale. It will assist countries in gaining access to information and sound technologies to enable them to care for their environment while improving economic growth for present and future generations.

The SDN workshop brought together 19 participants from developing countries, international organizations and NGOs, as well as technical specialists. The group offered policy advice to UNDP on setting up the pilot phase of the SDN. To date, 21 requests and proposals to participate in the pilot project have been submitted.

Poland shares experiences with Baltics and the CIS

Representatives from the Government of Poland met with officials from the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to share Poland's experiences in aid coordination and management of its economic transition. The three-day workshop, held last month in Warsaw, Poland, enabled participants to understand how Poland uses technical cooperation to design and implement economic and social change.

UNDP contributed financial and organizational support for the seminar. The gathering provided a forum for Polish institutions and those of the CIS and Baltic States to make contact, address common problems, and define future cooperation.

While Poland receives technical assistance from many sources, collaboration with UNDP has fostered new approaches that have

been relevant to the country's transition process. UNDP has worked closely with the government to formulate a country programme for shaping new economic policies and legislation. Advisors are also helping enterprises, local governments, municipalities and training institutions to restructure their management systems and respond to new demands of a market economy.

New computer package offers essential agriculture information

Agricultural researchers worldwide can now have instant access to 190,000 pages of essential research material without leaving their computers. The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) is creating one of the world's largest full-text libraries on CD-ROM.

CGIAR is supported by UNDP, the World Bank and other international organizations. It promotes agricultural research centres around the world. These centres develop new ways to increase sustainable food production and improve the nutritional and economic well-being of low-income people.

The computer package, called CIARL BRS, consists of a set of 17 CD-ROM discs which provide a comprehensive library of text, graphics, maps and colour images. They include the following agricultural research subjects: developing new technologies to increase farm productivity; protecting natural resources; helping formulate food and agriculture policies; strengthening national agricultural research systems; conserving germplasm; and building links between institutions.

CIARL BRS requires an IBM-compatible microcomputer. Text can be printed on any standard PC printer. The price is $1,950. The price code is T19. To order the CIARL BRS collection: The World Bank, Office of the Publisher, 1818 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20433, USA.

Approved projects

(all projects subject to modification; sums quoted in US dollars)

Brazil — This project will test the commercial feasibility of using biomass for generating power. A pre-investment study will be conducted to explore technology options and identify equipment manufacturers. A site will be chosen for a demonstration plant in the northeastern part of Brazil.

UNDP contribution through the Global Environment Facility: $7,000,000. Funds will be used for consultants and sub-contracts. Executed by the Secretariat for Science and Technology. Implemented by a Consortium of public and private sector organizations. (BRA/92/G31)

China — UNDP will assist the State Tax Bureau in reforming tax policies, laws, regulations and administration. A general plan for the reforms will be prepared, and training sessions and seminars will be conducted.

UNDP contribution: $1,035,200. Government cost-sharing: $40,000. Parallel funding from the International Monetary Fund: $330,000. UNDP will provide international consultants to advise on reform plans, draft tax laws, conduct seminars, and support training seminars for six officials at the International Monetary Fund in Washington. Executed by the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges. Implemented by the State Tax Bureau. (CPR/91/521)

Central African Republic — One hundred new local self-help development activities will be created, all of which will be self-supporting. These enterprises will include 45 pharmacies, 40 shops, 10 warehouses for construction materials, four cassava and millet mills, and a pharmaceutical supply centre. Resources generated by these activities will finance other community ventures. Rural women will earn income from activities such as soap manufacturing, vegetable oil production and market gardening.

UNDP contribution: $1,168,800. United Nations Capital Development Fund contribution: $1,098,816. Government cost-sharing: $455,830. UNDP will provide experts, training, and sub-contracts. UNCDF will supply building materials and other equipment, and working capital for credit activities. Executed by Department of Economic and Social Development. Implemented by participating community development institutions. (CAF/91/CO1, CAF/91/002)

Regional Projects

RAS/92/005 — Despite rapid economic expansion over the past two decades, the Asia and Pacific region still accounts for 70 per cent of the world's poor. Governments are increasingly recognizing that poverty alleviation measures can be enhanced through planning that addresses the need for accurate human development indicators.

UNDP will assist the countries of the Asia and Pacific region

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in improving human development indicators and statistics through: capacity building in statistical training institutions; setting up a pool of human development experts in relevant ministries; and mobilizing resources.

UNDP contribution: $2.5 million. Cost-sharing from governments of the region: $12.8 million. Executed by ESCAP. Implemented by relevant ministries and departments. UNDP will provide experts, UN Volunteers in the field of training, and support for three inter-country meetings of national human development focal points.

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Human Development